



NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN INITIAL STUDY

January 9, 2013

TO: State Clearinghouse
Responsible and Trustee Agencies
Interested Agencies and Parties

FROM: Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Boulevard
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

WESTSIDE FACILITY PROJECT

The Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency) is preparing an Initial Study for the Westside Facility Project (Proposed Project). An Initial Study is a preliminary analysis of a project's potential environmental impacts used to determine whether a Negative Declaration or an Environmental Impact Report will be prepared. It is a public document that analyzes the potential environmental effects related to construction, operation, and maintenance of a project and describes ways to reduce or avoid possible environmental damage.

The Initial Study for the Proposed Project will be prepared in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the Water Agency's "Procedures for the Implementation of CEQA." The Water Agency will act as the Lead Agency pursuant to CEQA, and will consider all comments received in response to this Notice of Preparation, including comments from responsible and trustee agencies, property owners, and interested parties regarding the scope and content of the information to be included in the Initial Study. Agencies and interested members of the public are invited to provide input on the scope and content of the environmental information that should be included in the Initial Study.

SONOMA COUNTY WATER AGENCY

The Water Agency is a special district created by the California Legislature and operates under the direction of a Board of Directors, composed of the members of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. The law that created the Water Agency and defines its powers and duties authorizes it to produce and furnish surface water and groundwater for beneficial uses, to control flood waters, to generate electricity, to provide recreational facilities in connection with flood control and sanitation facilities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since 1981, the Water Agency has provided a Water Education Program (Education Program) to public and private schools located within the Water Agency's service area in Sonoma and northern Marin counties. The Education Program is designed to help educators teach students the value of water as an important natural resource and to promote water use efficiency and stewardship of the Russian River Watershed. One component of the Education Program is the Field Study Program, which currently

takes place at the Water Agency's Wohler facilities for students in the fifth grade. The Field Study Program runs from March through June, and September through November of each year. It is offered Monday through Thursday and is restricted to two classes a day.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Proposed Project is to relocate the Water Agency's Field Study Program to a facility that can safely accommodate students while continuing to utilize the nearby water collection facilities and the Russian River for the outdoor component of the program.

LOCATION

The Proposed Project is located on Water Agency property at 9560 Westside Road (Assessor's Parcel Number 110-140-003), in the unincorporated area of Forestville, Sonoma County, California. The project site is located just west of the Wohler Bridge, adjacent to Maxwell Grove, as shown in Figure 1, at the intersection of Westside and Wohler roads.

The Proposed Project site is a previously disturbed, abandoned quarry. The property adjacent to the Proposed Project site is owned by the Water Agency and operated by Sonoma County Regional Parks, known as Maxwell Grove, which consists of a fenced-in parking lot, picnic area, and boat launch access to the Russian River.

DESCRIPTION

The Proposed Project is construction of a facility that would be used as a classroom for the Water Agency's Field Study Program; as a location to hold teacher workshops; as a starting location for community tours of the Water Agency's Water Transmission System, which are offered to the public approximately four times a year; and as a starting location for tours for other agency representatives, visiting officials and researchers which are offered approximately six times a year.

The Proposed Project would consist of the construction of an approximately 4,000 – 5,000 square foot, one story building. The building would be constructed towards the back of the property, to minimize sight lines from Wohler and Westside roads, and would have a low profile design to fit into the surrounding landscape. The Proposed Project would include the installation of low intensity, non-glaring lighting and security cameras. The building would include two classroom areas, each able to hold up to 40 occupants, restroom facilities, a small kitchen area, a small enclosed storage garage, an outdoor sink area, and a shaded outdoor seating area with picnic tables.

In addition, the Proposed Project would require the construction of a new access road and asphalt parking lot. The paved access road will be approximately 16 feet wide by 200 feet long. The proposed parking lot would be constructed directly on the opposite side of the existing parking lot and would become an extension of it. Improvements to the existing parking lot may include: landscape improvements, removal of the cyclone fencing, and reconfiguring the entryway so that ingress and egress is made safer.

FUNDING

The cost of construction for the Proposed Project is estimated to be \$1.2 million. The source of funding would be the Water Agency's Water Transmission and General Funds, which are derived from revenue bond proceeds, income from water sales, and property tax revenues.

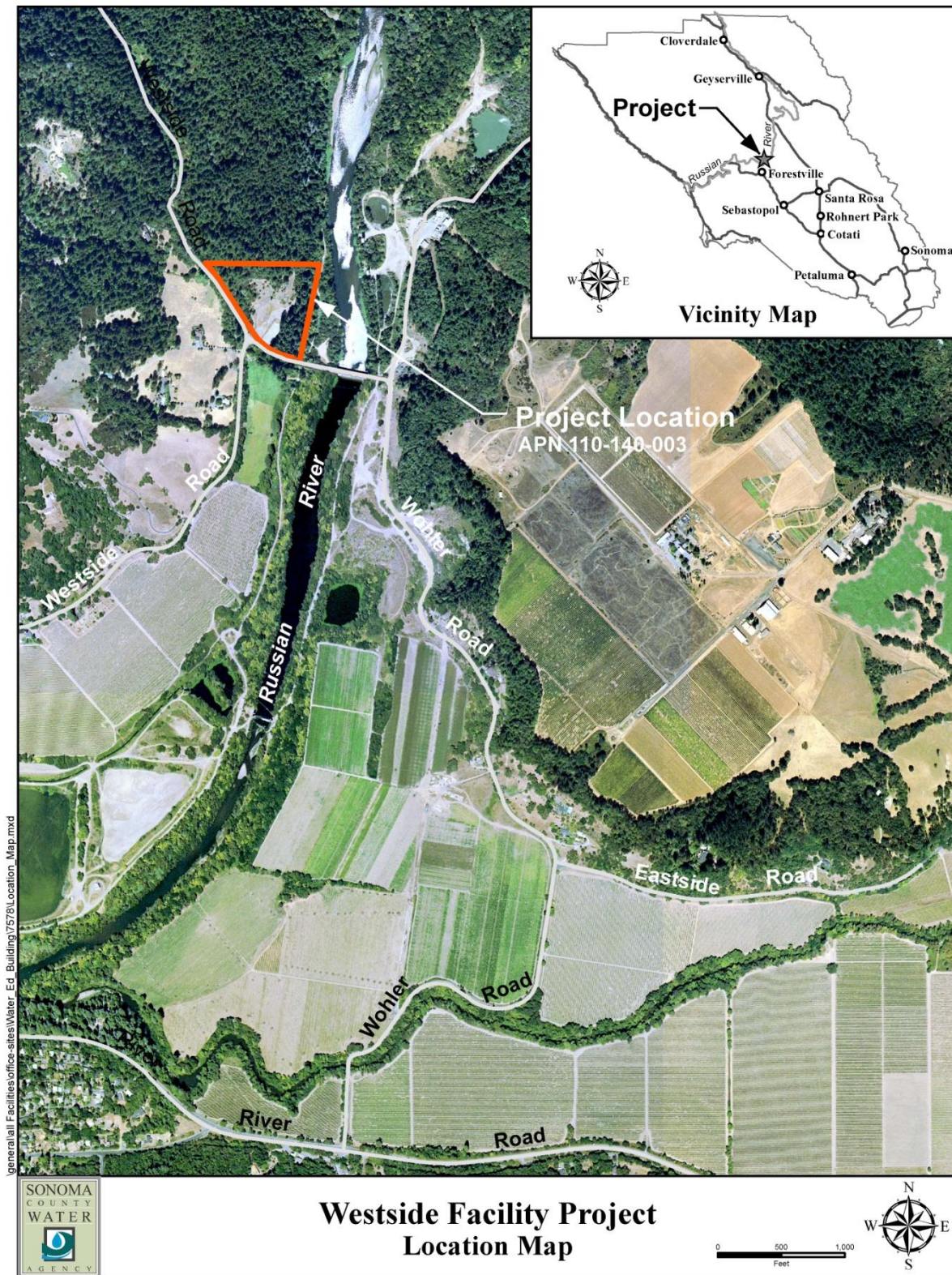


Figure 1

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE INITIAL STUDY

In accordance with CEQA, the Initial Study for the Proposed Project will analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project. Specific areas of analysis will include: aesthetics, agricultural and forestry resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards, hydrology and water quality, land use/planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, and utilities and service systems. Other areas of analysis may be added based on input from the public and public agencies during the Notice of Preparation review period. The Initial Study will be made available to decision-makers, responsible and trustee agencies under CEQA, and the public for review and comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR THIS NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 35 days after its mailing. The public comment period will close at 5:00 p.m. on February 13, 2013. Interested parties will also have an opportunity to comment on the Initial Study after it is published and circulated for public review. Please send your written comments regarding this Notice of Preparation to:

**Sonoma County Water Agency
Attn: Connie Barton, Environmental Specialist
404 Aviation Boulevard
Santa Rosa, CA 95403**

You may also submit comments electronically at the Water Agency's website:

www.sonomacountywater.org

SCOPING MEETING

In order for the public and regulatory agencies to have an opportunity to ask questions and submit comments on the scope of the Westside Facility Project, a Scoping Meeting will be held during the NOP review period. Comment forms will be supplied for those who wish to submit written comments at the scoping meeting; written comments may also be submitted anytime during the NOP review period. The date, time, and location of the Scoping Meeting is listed below:

<p>Tuesday, January 22nd 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Current Water Education Building 9750 Wohler Road Forestville, CA</p>

If you have any questions, or if you wish to update your information on our mailing list, please contact Connie Barton, Environmental Specialist, at (707) 547-1905.